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A
Word in Season

F O R

Christian Union

To all Protestant Dissenters from
the Church of *England*,
Especially those of the Ministry.

By an hearty Well-wisher to them, and the
Establish'd Religion.



L O N D O N, Printed in the Year, 1680.

Word in Season

For
the Christian Church
in the Protestant Episcopal
Church of the United States
Especially those of the Ministry

By a Society of Ministers to the
Episcopal Religion

LONDON: Printed by J. B. Nichols, 1830.



A Word in season for Christian Union.

Some will say, The times are such, as we know not what to say or think, but I am sure they are times wherein we all ought to think and do. To think what may conduce to the pleasing of our gracious Sovereign, and preservation of our Religion, and to do it with all speed. We have reason to believe from his Majesty's frequent Proclamations and Protestations of his Resolves to maintain and preserve the Protestant Religion, as now established, that all our lawfull endeavours to do the same, will be grateful and acceptable to his Majesty, whatever some Malecontents may suggest to the contrary. Now our business is seriously to consider what on our parts is meet to be done towards this great end. The Papists are our greatest and most dreaded Adversaries. Now if we may take our measures from the Enemies own Maxim, *Divide and Reign*, *Union* is the most likely way to our preservation. And since Unity and Conformity to the established Church is the proper means, and required of all by Law, why should we hazard all, and resolve to see the utmost of the Game, rather then yeild obedience to that Law? I fear, upon serious thinking, it will be found there is more of Deception, Interest and Will, than of Reason or Religion in our standing out. For would our dissenting Brethren of the Ministry plainly tell the People, how far they are from those Oaths and Covenants, whereby they themselves (as they say) stand bound; And that those obligations required now of the Ministers are not required of the People. Would they faithfully inform them, what they dare not deny to be true, that the Church of *England* is far from all Idolatry, and sound in her Articles and Constitutions; that this is as Soul-saving Doctrine preached by her Ministers, as by any others; that they may go to the Publick Assemblies, and join in the Publick Ordinances without sinning in so doing; that they may be built up in their most holy Faith, and instructed to lead a religious life there, as well as elsewhere. In a word, if they would convince them, that Ceremonies cannot, ought not to fright us from the substance. "That in an established Church, not infected with Heresie

"or Idolatry, nor defective in any part of Religion, it is duty to bear
 "with much. Which is the Judgment of a very

**J. Corbet's King- late considerable* * Author on their side. All
dom of God among which is true, and granted by many of the most ad-
men. pag. 172. mired men of their Party, doubtless the Meetings
 would be thinner, and the Publick Churches fuller
 than they are. And as for you of the Clergy, if you would lay
 aside Prejudice, Popularity, and Self-interest, and seriously consider
 a few things, methinks you might bring both, them and your selves
 too, to some reasonable Friendship with the Church of *England*. As,

1. That many of you (my Brethren) were Episcopally Ordained,
 and have vowed Conformity to the Church of *England*. Which Or-
 ders and Obligations you have not openly retracted and declared void
 and null: and so are bound still by them; they being in their own
 nature as obligatory, as any other which you have since taken. For
 the former Oaths and Obligations you took upon you in obedience to
 lawful Authority, a considerable circumstance, which in the latter you
 cannot pretend to: unless you will have that to be Law, which the
 longest Sword establisheth as such; which I presume you will not a-
 vouch, because you may easily foresee whither such a Principle will
 lead you.

2. That while you refuse Conformity to the established Church,
 you dwindle into a thousand Factions; And are so confused, that
 multitudes of your followers, like the dispersed *Jews*, know not what
 Tribe they are of; who is their Head, what their Government, or
 whither they tend. As suppose a Man should take an account of the
 swarms in the private Meetings, and ask them what Judgment or
 Perswasion they are of? not one in an hundred can tell you. Because
 in truth they know not the difference between *Episcopal, Presbyterian,*
Independent, &c. understand not what those cramp words signifie; Nor
 indeed some of you their Teachers. I have heard some of your Brethren
 (and none of the most inconsiderable neither) affirm themselves *Presby-*
terians, who upon examination and discourse proved themselves *In-*
dependents. And the truth is, as the case stands with you, you are most
 of you *Independents* as to practice. And those very Men of the Mini-
 stry, who were wont to decry that Faction both in the Pulpit, and
 through the wider mouth of the Press, now herd with them, whom
 they heretofore judged to stand at a greater distance from them, as to
 the power and placing of the Keys, the administration of, and admis-
 sion to the Sacraments, than the Church of *England*. And therefore
 whereas

whereas all dissenting *Protestants* are huddled together under the name of *Presbyterians*, I think it were more proper under the title of *Independents*, who are certainly the greater number.

3. If also it were well weighed, that what the Magistrate requires, in order to your admission into the established Church, cannot be made by the Word of God so apparently sinful, as it is apparent by that Word, that Obedience to Magistrates is a Duty. I need not cite the many plain Texts that require the latter: I wish you (my Brethren) would publish the Text as plain for the former. If you cannot, as I think (if I am not mistaken in my Bible) you cannot, the meanest *Logician* will tell you, you leave a certain Duty for an uncertain; and run upon, and persist in a known Sin, to avoid that which is only doubted, and disputed to be so, which men of your great Reason and tender Conscience (one would think) should not be guilty of.

4. Nor is it unworthy your thoughts, who are of the Ministry, how far you have owned the King's Supremacy, by accepting the Indulgence his Majesty was pleased once to give you by his Royal Proclamation. When his late Majesty of pious memory *K. Charles* the first, required your Conformity, you obeyed the Parliament against him, and fought many years against the King's Supremacy, by the Ordinances of Parliament. And now when his present Majesty granted you an Indulgence, without the Parliament, or consent of the Law made by King, Lords and Commons, then you owned his Supremacy: which is as much as to say, the King hath a Power for you, but none against you. Or when he yields what you desire, 'tis lawful to obey him; but if he denies, you will disown him, and deny his Authority. And I am induced to believe there is no dissenting Party, but would own his Majesty's Supremacy in establishing them. If his Majesty would set up the *Presbyterian Government*, they would applaud it. If the *Independent*, they would justify it; whatever the established Law of the Land is, or saith to the contrary. And why is not his Majesty's Command (together with the Law) to conform to the Church as now established, as binding as any, and as reasonable to be obeyed and conformed to, as if his Majesty should enjoin either of the former?

'Twill be an hard question for you to answer, whether the King with the Law, or the King without the Law, is to be obeyed? And yet I think, decide it which way you will, the decision of it would end in your condemnation. I have not forgot how frequently and violently that text, *Rom. 13. 1, 2, 3.* [*be that resisteth, shall receive to himself Damnation*] was used to be urged and pressed in the late time by you:

but

but now, with the Ceremonial Law, you have abolished it ; as if the Holy Ghost had designed it in favour of those Governors, and that Government which you would have set up only, and no other. I pray God some of you don't find at last, that, and such like Divine Precepts, as forceable now, as ever you once thought them to be. —

5. Besides, 'Tis no light-matter, that you suffer those many amongst you to go on quietly in the breach of their late Oaths, Sacraments, and Subscriptions, which they took, and laid themselves under, in a seeming obedience to the Law : which they gave all the Testimony and assurance to our Governors, that Tongues and Hands, Words and Letters could express, that they were and would be conformable to the Government as then established, both in Church and State. 'Tis to be feared many of you took the Test, only to save your Bacon. For some did not stick to disgorge themselves of it soon after in your private Assemblies, by a seeming Repentance, and feigned Confession, how sorry they were for what they had done ; to the just provoking of his Majesty, contempt of the Law, dishonour of you who accepted those Retractions, and reproach of the Protestant Religion, which you would have the sole credit of being defenders of. These things I know (my Brethren) to my grief, and could find you out some of these Penitents, if need were. And pray tell me, what any Papist or Jesuit could do more, to save their Stake, and elude lawful Authority ? Well, a day will come, when these Oaths will make them sick in good earnest ; I mean not the taking of them, but their making no Conscience to be true to them. Friends, 'tis not time aday to dally and play the fool with God, and our own Consciences, but to lay these things to heart, and to resolve in your mind, whether these things considered, it will not make most for the Glory of God, the pleasing of his Vicegerent on Earth, the peace of your own Consciences, the preservation of our Religion, and dishearting of our common Enemy, to unite and join your selves speedily and heartily to the established Church. The Enemy then could with no colour feign and fix Plots upon you, of seeking to subvert the Government, which your Schism and Dissension gives them advantage to do. And if ever Popery creep into and get possession of the House, 'tis Division opens the Door to it. And 'tis not all your talking finely to the People against Popery can ever overthrow this Vanity. For the Eternal Truth hath spoken it, *that an House divided cannot stand.* And tho' 'tis commonly talked among you, that the Church of England is coming apace to Popery ; yet a serious consideration and unprejudiced Reason will

will inform you better: or if that cannot, time will, that she is the chief Bar to keep it out. And that the best course you can take to this end, is to strengthen her hands, by joyning with her. Both together may do it, without her. (what ever is pretended,) you never can.

6. And to draw towards a Close, let me intreat you to consider a few Apothegms or Maxims (or call them what you will) which I suppose may be the more taking with you, because they were drawn up and published by a dissenting Brother in the late Times, and looked on as very sound then, &c. I hope they be not now grown rotten with Age. They are against allowing any Toleration or Liberty of Conscience, in those dayes, how muchsoever 'tis pleaded for now. As if the Men of those Times had been infallible, and there could be no Conscience at all in those that differed from them. Hear what he saith, and pardon me that I conceal his Name, till I have further occasion. He lies close in the little hole over the Oven, is very loth to be exposed this cold Weather, and I have a little the more respect to him, because of his age.

1. First (saith he) *Augustin's* Tongue had not owed his Mouth one penny rent, though it had never spoke word more in it than this, *Nullum malum pejus libertate errandi.*

2. He that is willing to tolerate any unsound Opinion, that his own may be tolerated though never so sound, will for a need hang God's Bible at the Devil's girdle.

3. It is better to live in a Church united, though a little corrupt, than in a Church, whereof some part is incorrupt, and all the rest divided.

4. Liberty of Conscience can be nothing else, but a freedom from Sin and Error, and Liberty of Error nothing but a poyson for Conscience.

5. *Religio docenda est, non coercenda*, is a pritty peice of *album Latinum* for some kind of throats that are willingly fore. That's a choker! Without doubt the Man thought the wheel would never turn; That they who are then atop, would never more be underneath.

6. Toleration turns the Church, Christ's Academy, into the Devil's Univeristy, where any Man may commence Scismatick *per saltum*; and he that is *Filius Diabolicus*, or *simpliciter pessimus*, may have his Grace to go to Hell *cum privilegio*, and carry as many after him as he can. This is as biting as new-made Mustard; but who can help it? 'tis the sauce of his own providing, to make your meat go down the

the better; and if it relished well then, why is it disgusted now? 2

7. They that think they have found a way to Heaven, who cannot find the way to Church, have found a way thither that was never of God's making. Good again.

8. 'Tis dangerous sayling by their Compass, who pretend to have discovered the North-West Passage to Heaven. True as the former. The good old man hath many more of the same stamp, but here are enough put together to amount to a full conviction, that your Principles and Practices then were different from what they are now. Separation, or not joyning with you, was a sin, and not to be allowed upon any pretence whatsoever. But now any pretence must justify Non-communication with the present Established Church. He that talked against you and your Church-government then, was a prophane fellow, and a malignant: but he that babbles most against Ecclesiastical Government now, is hugg'd as a zealous and good Christian. For shame, my Brethren, shew your selves Christians, and yeild what you can, rather then hazard all. And account it your honour, as well as honesty, at last to return to your Duty. Walk by that golden Rule, the sum of the Law and the Prophets, Do to all Men, as you would they should do unto you. And press Conformity upon your hearers now, as much as you used to do when you ruled in the Church. Tell them plainly there is never a Prayer in the public Liturgy, but they may safely joyn in it, for it is put up to the true God, in the name of Jesus Christ, for things agreeable to his will. And desire them for God's sake, and for Religion sake to conform as far as they may, without sin. And lead them on to this by your own Example; And we will desire no more, and give you our hearty thanks for doing this, though but your duty: But if you still remain inconstant to your Vowes and Promises, and wilfull in your ways of Separation, and by your Example and preaching encourage others to follow after you, I must for once tell you, you do amiss, and 'tis Iniquity, even the Solemn Meeting. *Isa. 1. 13.*

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